

BIRDING HOTSPOTS
CITY OF ROCKS NATIONAL RESERVE AND CASTLE ROCKS STATE PARK
(By Wallace Keck, Park Superintendent)

Be sure and pick-up the recent Birding Checklist for the parks at the visitor center in Almo, or on-line at <http://www.nps.gov/ciro/naturescience/upload/2008%20CIRO%20Bird%20Checklist.pdf>. If you have specific birds to find, call or email Wallace Keck to find out the best, most current locations; 208-824-5519 x. 101, Wallace_Keck@partner.nps.gov.

The following is a list of excellent birding areas as mapped on the back page.

Cedar Hill – From Big Cove Road and on around Little Cove Ranch Road, listen for pinyon jays in the hillside covered with Utah juniper, and the occasional pinyon pine. This is also a great place for juniper titmouse, Swainson’s hawk, and black-throated gray warbler.

Almo Creek Wetland & Eagle Rock Grove – In the Ranch Unit of Castle Rocks State Park, good birding is found around the ranch house orchard and Almo Creek. Upstream of the ranch house a few hundred yards is the Almo Creek Wetland, where 12 acres are fenced to keep cattle out, and willows are dominant. Further upstream to the rock formation known as Eagle Rock is a grove of cottonwoods and aspens. These areas are excellent for diversity of birds, especially warblers and flycatchers. Watch for Wilson’s snipe on the road into the park.

Stines Creek Picnic Area – The picnic area features Stines Creek, aspens, and edges with bitterbrush, sagebrush, mountain mahogany, willows, and junipers. Such a variety of species is found here that it may well be the best birding area in the park. Be sure and walk through the picnic area aspens, then upstream along the willows. Hummingbirds, swifts, swallows, chat, bushtits, green-tailed towhees, orange-crowned warblers, gnatcatchers, and too many species to list here are often found.

Smoky Mountain Campground – Walk the loop for black-throated gray warblers, flycatchers, and Cassin’s Vireo.

Area 1 – Nematode Aspens – Walk the road ½-mile west from Elephant Rock to rock formations and rich aspen stand for red-naped sapsuckers, nesting red-tailed hawks, black-headed grosbeaks and many species on the edge of plant communities.

Area 2 – Bath Rock Overlook – Walk Creekside Trail to rim in the evening to watched raptors, and to hear owls, poorwills, and thrushes in the canyon below.

Area 3 – Parking Lot Rock – Walk the trail to Window Rock creek for MacGillivray’s warbler, swifts, and much more.

Area 4 – Emery Pass Picnic Area – the Aspen stand often holds many treasures like warbling vireo.

Area 5 – Emery Canyon and Creek – best bet for yellow warblers, flycatchers, and lazuli bunting.

Area 6 – North Fork Circle Creek Trail – probably the best backcountry hike in Cassia County. Bird diversity is assured, including Virginia warbler, western tanager, lazuli bunting, and just about everything else the park as to offer.

Area 7 – Indian Grove is a bit of a hike from a gate near the boundary with Sawtooth NF, but this is the best backcountry birding in CIRO. The grove itself is chock full of aspens and fir, with high, wet meadows. Pine siskin, kinglet, goldfinch, and chickadee rules. Swallows, red-naped sapsuckers, towhees, small accipiters, Virginia warblers and even sage grouse are found at the edges. (Road requires higher clearance vehicles to get to trail head). Look for golden eagles on west-side cliffs on the way up. This is also gray flycatcher country.

Area 8 – Sawtooth National Forest (first forest grove) – alpine fir, lodge pole and high mountain meadows offer a number of species that prefer solitude and evergreen forests. Olive-sided flycatchers, western wood-peewee and crossbills are up here. Chipping sparrows, chickadees and kinglets are constant.

(Map on back side of page)

Birding Hotspots in City of Rocks National Reserve and Castle Rocks State Park

